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A Newscaster's Recording of Shooting

What follows is a remarkable eyewitness description of the shooting incident that resulted in the critical wounding early Wednesday of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. It was recorded by Mutual correspondent Andrew West who was interviewing Sen. Kennedy for a Los Angeles station and the Mutual network:

Kennedy—"My thanks to all of you and now it's on to Chicago and let's win there." Cheers from crowd. Crowd—"We want Bobby. We want Bobby."

West—"Senator, how are you going to counter Mr. Humphrey and his backgrounding you as far as the delegate votes go?"

Kennedy—"It just goes back to the struggle for it . . . " Immediately after the quote by Kennedy background noise of gunshot and screaming from crowd.

West—"Senator Kennedy has been shot—Senator Kennedy has been shot—is that possible, is that possible? It is possible ladies and gentlemen. It is possible. He has. Not only Senator Kennedy—Oh my God—Senator Kennedy has been shot and another man—a Kennedy campaign manager — and possibly shot in the head. I am right here and Rafer Johnson has hold of the man who apparently has fired the shot. He has fired the shot . . . He still has the gun the gun is pointed at me right this moment. I hope they can get the gun out of his hand. Be very careful. Get the gun . . . get the gun get the gun . . . stay away from the gun . . . stay away from the gun.

"His hand is frozen . . . get his thumb . . . get his thumb . . . get his thumb . . . get his thumb . . . get his thumb. Take a hold of his thumb . . . and break it if you have to . . . get his thumb. Get away from the barrel. Get away from the barrel man. Look out for the gun. OK — all right. That's it Rafer, get it. Get the gun Rafer. OK now hold on to the gun. Hold on to him. Hold on to him.

"Ladies and gentlemen they have the gun away from the man. In this—they've got the gun. I can't see the man. I can't see who it is. Senator Kennedy right now is on the ground. He has been shot. This is a—this is—what is it? Wait a minute. Hold him — hold him. We don't want another Oswald. Hold him Rafer. We don't want another Oswald. Hold him Rafer. Keep people away from him. Keep people away from him. All right ladies and gentlemen. This is a—make room, make room, make room, make room. The Senator is on the ground. He's bleeding profusely . . . from apparently — clear back — apparently the Senator has been shot from the frontal area, we can't see exactly where the Senator has been shot. But come on, push back, grab a hold of me, grab hold of me and let's pull back. That's it. Come on. Get hold of my arms. Let's pull back. Let's pull back. All right. They . . . the Senator is now . . the ambulance has been called for and the ambulance is bringing the ambulance in this entrance and this is a terrible thing. It's reminiscent of the valley the other day when the Senator was out there and somebody hit him in the head with a rock. And people couldn't believe it at that time. But it is a fact.

"Keep room. Ethel Kennedy is standing by. She is calm. She's raising her hand high to motion people back. She is attempting to get calm. A woman with a tremendous amount of presence. A tremendous amount of presence. It's impossible to believe. It's impossible to believe. There's a certain amount of fanaticism here now . . . as this has occurred no one . . . we're trying to run everybody back. Clear the area. Clear the area. Right at this moment—the Senator apparently. We can't see if he is still conscious or not. Can you see if he is conscious?"

Observer—"What?"

West—"Can you see if he is conscious?"

Half-Conscious

Observer — "I don't know . . . no, no . . . he is half-conscious."

West — "He is half-conscious, and ladies, we can't see . . . ladies and gentlemen . . . one of the men apparently a Kennedy supporter, is going berserk. Come on . . . come on . . . out, out, out. Is there some way to close these doors, Jess? Is there any doors here? Out through the . . . out through the exit . . . let's go. Out we go . . . unbelievable situation. They're clearing the halls.

"One man has blood on himself. We're walking down the corridors here. Repitition in my speech . . . I have no alternative. The shock is so great. My mouth is dry. I can only say that here in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel — the back entrance from the podium—in the press room. The Senator walked out the back. I was directly behind him. You heard a balloon go off and a shot. You didn't realize that the shot was a shot. Screams went up—two men were on the ground — both bleeding profusely. One of them was Senator Robert Kennedy. At this moment, we are stunned. We are shaking as is everyone else. In this kitchen corridor at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, they're blocking off the entrance now. Supposedly to make room for the ambulance. That's all we can report at this moment. I do not know if the Senator is dead or if he is alive. We do not know the name of the gentleman concerned. This is Andrew West, Mutual News, Los Angeles."

By Stephen Northrup—The Washington Post

Fairfax County policemen guard Hickory Hill, McLean home of Sen. Kennedy, barring all unauthorized visitors.

United Press International

Sirhan Sirhan, suspect in shooting of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, is under arm of K. Dun Gifford, aide to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, as he is subdued. In foreground is football player Roosevelt Grier. Looking on in left rear are newsme Warren Rogers and Paul Hope.